

WASHINGTON- House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Rep. Norm Dicks gave the following statement on the House floor during consideration of the FY2012 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill:

"Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my friend, Ranking Member Price, for yielding.

"I would like to express my appreciation to Chairman Rogers, Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Price for their work on this bill and to the Committee staff that has worked long days and many long nights to produce this bill for our consideration today. I would also like to commend the Majority's effort to accommodate many of the concerns of Members on the Democratic side.

"I would also like to thank Chairman Rogers and Aderholt for bringing this bill to the floor through the regular order and working with me to bring it to the floor with a rule that allows Members to offer their amendments.

"At the outset, let me state for the record that I believe the allocation for this bill is too low. The bill is about \$1.1 billion below the FY11 enacted level, almost \$2 billion below the President's request, and it would represent the second straight year of a declining homeland security budget.

"Some parts of this bill are very good, and I commend the Chairman for providing adequate funding for the front line employees of the Department of Homeland Security to continue to conduct critical operations along our borders, protect our airports and seaports, and to respond to the series of natural disasters we have experienced this spring.

"However, some serious gaps remain. My colleague, Mr. Price, has already described in detail the dangerous reduction in our support for the nation's first responders.

"Also slashed in this bill is the budget for research and development activities at the

Department. The bill approved by the Full Committee provides less than \$400 million for the Science and Technology Directorate's Research, Development, Acquisition and Operations account, a cut of more than 40 percent. At this level for 2012, S&T has informed us that several critical research efforts already underway on cyber security, disaster resiliency, and detection of chemical and biological threats would be halted.

"America's technological edge is one of our greatest assets in the fight against terrorism, and I believe that it would be a mistake to retreat from the aggressive pursuit of new solutions.

"I also want to bring my colleagues' attention to another disturbing, precedent-setting provision in this bill. It would require the President to submit a budget amendment for additional disaster relief funding three months before the balance of available funds reaches \$800 million. And it would require those additional funds to be fully offset from discretionary budget accounts. Certainly, Democrats as well as Republicans would like to see less reliance on supplemental appropriations to fund known disaster relief needs. But when disasters strike, victims need help, and they need help quickly. We should not risk delaying disaster relief because of partisan battles over proposed offsets. Nor should we create a mechanism that could tie up the relief process because a disaster did not do us the courtesy of providing three months notice.

"During our consideration of the bill, we will have the opportunity to address these and other serious flaws, and I am hopeful that we will be able to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I yield back the balance of my time."

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